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cleans it out, and rearranges the grass coil around the sides. The discoloured water is then drawn out in gourdfuls and thrown away. They continue drawing the water till they are satisfied that the well is clean again. Every day the walls of the trough receive a fresh coating of sand and are thus kept smooth and clean. All the work falls to the men and boys. Men, assisted by the bigger boys, dig the wells and make the troughs and draw the water. The smaller boys guard the water. Women and girls only draw water for household purposes.

There were dozens of wells at Yik, the bed of the river having been bored every few yards. As each well supplied two or three troughs the ground was covered with shiny pools.

X.

Water is the primary problem of the herdsman's life in Nuerland. A secondary problem, for it arises from excess or insufficiency of water, is pasturage. In their seasonal movements Nuer are not only seeking water but also nourishing grasses and when herdsmen take the cattle from camp to their grazing grounds they do not guide them haphazardly across the plain but drive them to where they know of succulent grasses. The best pastures are often far from camp and the cattle have to be milked early so that they may have time to graze, drink water, chew the cud, and graze again before returning to camp. It is necessary to herd the cattle in the dry season, but Nuer say that it is better to do so at all times of the year though they do not always act accordingly. When I brought one of my cows from Yakwac to Mancom early in the rains it was noticeably thinner than the Mancom cattle. The Mancom people said that the Yakwac cattle do not do so well as their own because the Yakwac people do not herd their cattle in the rains and take them to the best pastures but leave them to graze by themselves. Consequently they graze on the exhausted pasturage near the homesteads. At Mancom a man always accompanied the cattle and took them to the richest grasses.

Nuer are great authorities on grasses and know all about their habits and distributions. They never make a mistake in identifying

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those grasses which are *wal ghok*, cattle-grasses, and those plants which are eaten regularly by cattle, sheep, and goats or are used for veterinary purposes. One is only given names of plants with hesitation or given different names by different persons when they have no particular value or use. One should not, however, bring leaves and flowers home and ask a Nuer for the names, for this confuses him, but he knows them at once when he sees them growing, as he would normally see them. Not the form of the plant alone but its form together with its habitat enable him quickly to identify it, for some plants are found in gardens, others on sandy ridges, others in the open plain, and others near streams.

It is probable that Nuer expansion has to a considerable degree been influenced by the distribution of pasture grasses. I am not a botanist and can only record a few of the main grasses which are found in both Western and Eastern Nuerland without being able to give their distribution in these latitudes. However, Nuer have told me that the reason they did not oust the Ngok Dinka from their enclave was that their pastures are not up to the grazing standards Nuer demand for their cattle. It has also been pointed out to me by Nuer that Shillukland is very poor in grazing grasses, a statement which seems to me, from a very slight acquaintance with Shilluk country, to be true.

There are some Nuer grasses the cattle like, some they will eat if they are hungry, and some which they refuse at all times. The richness of pasture varies at different times of the year and in different places and it is these seasonal and local variations which determine Nuer annual, and daily, movements.

In the season of *Rwil*, the springtime of the year when the early rains fall, all the grasses either send up new shoots or begin to grow again after several months of arrested growth. This is a season of fatness for the cattle. All the pasture grasses are short and tender and they can choose the most luscious of them and graze on them to their hearts' content. In this time of plenty they nibble the heads of the grasses of which they are not greatly fond while they graze to the ground a favourite grass like *gau* (*Andropogon Gayanus Kunth*).

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that 'one explanation put forward for this abstention is that the bird can fly in the skies and is accordingly in communication with the Great Spirit'.[1] The *jakok in rol*, the pied crow, a bird which frequents Nuer homesteads, is especially favoured because it is the bird of the female spirit *buk*, the mother of *deng*. Nuer say that 'everyone respects the pied crow', and one sometimes hears it spoken of as *kuaar*, priest. Nuer can therefore readily entertain the idea of a bird being the totem of a lineage, being, that is, an emblem of Spirit conceived of in relation to a lineage. Also, whilst I would hesitate to say that all Nuer have a high regard for snakes, it can be said that they do not go out of their way to harm them, whether they belong to lineages which respect snakes or not. They leave them in peace unless they are threatened by them or suddenly afraid of them. All Nuer seem to regard them as being in some sense manifestations of Spirit, so that, here again, it appears natural to those who do not respect them that other people should do so. Some of the more important totems are trees. To all intents and purposes, and so far as any question of showing them respect or otherwise is concerned, this means trees of certain species when they grow on village sites, and no Nuer, and not only those who respect them as totems, would injure trees growing near their homesteads. Nuerland is for the most part treeless savannah country, and trees which give shade, such as sycamores and to some extent the tamarind, are rare. Nuer have a feeling that those which give them shade in their sun-baked homes have grown there by a special dispensation of God. Their being there at all is a manifestation of Spirit, and all the more so if, as is sometimes the case, they have grown from saplings or cuttings planted as shrines to spirits. Here again, therefore, people can easily understand that such trees are regarded by some lineages as material manifestations of a special relationship of Spirit to themselves.[2] Rivers and streams also have a general spiritual significance for all Nuer because they are associated with *buk man deang*, which is the spirit of all rivers. It is *kwoth pini*, the spirit of water. Nuer say that *'yier e kwoth neini dial'*, 'rivers are the spirit (totem) of everybody'. Again, monorchids are for all a sign of spiritual activity, as is also the birth of a calf with cuany markings.

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[1] H. C. Jackson, op. cit., p. 169.

[2] It may be noted that the Nuer word for tree, *jath* (pl. *jen*), is probably the same word as the generic term for totem in Dinka, *yath* (pl. *yeth*) (P. A. Nebel, *Dinka Grammar*, 1948, p. 170).